

Build on Unprecedented Transparency Instituted in the 110th Congress

WASHINGTON – Today, Rep. Dave Obey (D-WI), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI), incoming Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, announced three significant changes to further increase transparency and reduce funding levels for earmarks, building on reforms brought about in the last Congress.

Previously implemented reforms:

- **2007 Moratorium:** In January of 2007, Democrats imposed a one-year moratorium on earmarks for 2007 until a reformed process could be put in place.
- **Rules for Transparency:** Under the 2007 rules, each bill must be accompanied by a list identifying each earmark that it includes and which member requested it. Those lists are available online before the bill is ever voted on. In the House, each earmark on those lists is backed up by a public letter from the requesting member identifying the earmark, the entity that will receive the funds and their address, what the earmark does, and a certification that neither the requesting member nor their spouse will benefit from it financially. In the Senate, each Senator is required to send the committee a letter providing the name and location of the intended recipient, the purpose of earmark, and a letter certifying that neither the Senator nor the Senator's immediate family has a financial interest in the item requested. The certification is available on the internet at least 48 hours prior to a floor vote on the bill.
- **Significant Reductions:** In the 2008 bills, the total dollar amount earmarked for non-project-based accounts in appropriations bills was reduced by 43%.
- **Other Measures:** Earmarks produced by conference committees, not in the original House or Senate bills, are clearly identified with an asterisk. Members are able to offer floor amendments on earmarks under the rules of the House and Senate.

In our continuing effort to provide unprecedented transparency to the process, new reforms to begin with the 2010 bills include:

- **Posting Requests Online:** To offer more opportunity for public scrutiny of member requests, members will be required to post information on their earmark requests on their websites at the time the request is made explaining the purpose of the earmark and why it is a valuable use of taxpayer funds.
- **Early Public Disclosure:** To increase public scrutiny of committee decisions, earmark disclosure tables will be made publically available the same day as the House or Senate Subcommittee rather than Full Committee reports their bill or 24 hours before Full Committee consideration of appropriations legislation that has not been marked up by a Senate Subcommittee.
- **Further Cuts:** Earmarks will be further reduced to 50% of the 2006 level for non-project-based accounts. In FY 2008, earmark funding levels were reduced by 43% below the 2006 level. Earmarks will be held below 1% of discretionary spending in subsequent years.

“Today we build on the unprecedented reforms made to earmarks since Democrats took control of the Congress in 2007,” said Obey and Inouye. “These reforms mean that earmarks will be funded at a level half as high as they were in 2006, face greater public scrutiny, and members of Congress will have more time and access to more information before they vote on bills and as they prepare amendments.”